



SERMON CXIX.

WE have been considering how the Spirit applies himself to the *Understanding*, by way of Conviction, and that both of *Sin* and *Misery*, in the Preparatory Work. It follows to observe,

2. *THAT* he inwardly applies himself to the *Understanding* by way of saving Illumination. He enlightens it in the knowledge of Christ. The Spirit of God is a free Agent, and comes in to the Soul at his pleasure; but because he treats with the man, according to his nature, he usually first begins with the former Conviction, in which, having brought him into distress, and put him upon inquiring, he now comes and reveals Christ unto him, as the only Remedy against the misery, which by sin he is brought into. Not as it by the former work there were any saving Change wrought in the Soul, or any Obligation by it laid upon him to proceed to the producing of the saving Change. He may leave the man there; and if he doth, he still is a stranger to the life of Christ. However it may be said of such an one, who is under such Convictions, that *he is not far from the Kingdom of Heaven*; as having been under the Law, which is our Schoolmaster to Christ. This Work of saving *Illumination* wrought by the Spirit on the Soul in passive Conversion, is a secret and mysterious Work, and better known by the Person who hath received it, than capable of being described by words. And many times the most that such a person can say of himself is, *That I know, that whereas once I was blind, now I see.* Give me leave however to make some essay, to stammer out a little about it. Let us then observe these Conclusions,

1. *THAT* the whole body of *sanctifying and saving Graces* are at once ingenerated in *passive Conversion*. There is not a succession in this Work, but it is at once and instantaneous. These Graces are many, and some of them belong to the *Understanding*, others to

the Will and Affections, but yet they all of them go in together to constitute the new Nature in us; the whole of them therefore is for that reason called the new Man, which is put on in our Renovation, *Eph.* 4. 23, 24. And this is called the new Creature or Creation, *2 Cor.* 5. 17. Now Creation is in an instant. If God say, Let such a thing be, it forthwith stands forth in its entire Being. It is called *the Divine Nature*, *2 Pet.* 1. 4. As having its original from God, and being a Conformity to his Image. And there is no Grace but what belongs to it; for the new Man is perfect, and hath no member wanting, *Jam.* 1. 4.

2. *THAT there is a distinction and order of these Graces in themselves, and ought to be so in our Consideration of them.* They are distinct in themselves; for though they all proceed from the same principles of infused Holiness, yet they are so many diverse Members going in to make up that one Body in us. As therefore the hand is not the foot, though both are of the Body, so neither is one Grace another; Faith is not Love, Patience is not Joy &c. though all belong to the new Nature. They are also distinguished in the subject of them: there are some of them seated in the Understanding which is renewed by them, *Gal.* 3. 10. and are usually called intellectual; others are in the Will and Affections, *Eph.* 4. 24. and are called moral. There is also an order between them, one is before another, though not in Being, for so they are together, yet with respect to Operation, one working by and from another, *Gal.* 5. 6. Of which more anon. And this distinction and order is to be observed by us, in our considering of them; and that not merely from the necessity of our manner of Conception, but also from the nature of the things themselves. In our Contemplation of the Divine Perfections, we are necessitated to take them afunder, though in God they are but that one absolute & simple Being, else we could know nothing of him; but the Graces in us have the foundation of this distinct and orderly consideration in them, being created Perfections in us, and assigned to their several uses.

3. *HENCE, For a clear apprehension of the Work of Effectual Calling, we must consider the saving Operation of the Spirit on the Understanding, and on the Will apart.* That he doth influence them both with his Power in this Work is certain, and that because he draws them with the cords of a man, and they are brought to believe in Christ as *Causes by counsel*; they must therefore have both Eyes to see, and Ears to hear, and an Heart to embrace him. The act of Faith being a trusting in on Christ as an Object suitable, and apprehended to be so, the power of Believing wrought in passive Conversion must needs correspond hereto. Why we first treat of the renewing of the Understanding by Illumination, will appear in the Sequel. Concerning which let us observe,

1. *THAT there is a literal knowledge, necessarily either antecedent to, or concomitant of this saving Illumination.* By a literal knowledge I understand, a rational conception of the Truths of the Gospel, which are to be believed by us; to which also belongs an humane credit or historical faith of the truth of them. Now the saving Illumination always supposeth such a knowledge as this; either it finds it in the man, or brings it into him. Without this knowledge the mind of man cannot be good. The want of this belongs to that hiding of the Gospel, of which, *2 Cor.* 4. 3. *But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.* This therefore is the next and immediate design of the literal and ministerial teaching appointed by God, tho' the ultimate aim of it is to bring men to a saving acquaintance with Christ; the Spirit having chosen ordinarily to convey this sanctifying light in this way. A defect in this knowledge is blamed by the Apostle in them, *Heb.* 5. 12. *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.* And a neglect of instructing the People in it, is severely charged on those Priests of old, *Hos.* 4. 6. *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

2. *THAT there may be a literal knowledge, and an historical Faith, where there is no saving Illumination.* Altho' the latter is not without the former, yet the former may be, where the latter is not. The one is but a common gift, whereas the other is a saving Grace. The Articles of Religion are delivered intelligibly, accommodable to the sentiments of humane reason, and may be so understood, as the rules of other Arts, by him that applies his mind to read, and hear, and study upon them. And there are no Truths have more rational confirmations given to gain mens credit, than those of the Word of God. And though it be a great favour of God to make men Orthodox in the points of Divinity, and not leave them to a Spirit of error; yet it is given to such as never come to a spiritual discerning. Christ supposeth that men may *know their Lord's will, and not do it*, *Luk.* 12. 47. And it is beyond question, that there are some who have a very large portion of knowledge in Religion, who are yet utter strangers to the saving knowledge of Christ; whereas there are others whose knowledge of these things is more confused, who yet do so know God and Christ, as is Eternal Life.

3. *THAT there is a saving knowledge of Christ, wrought in Effectual Vocation, that belongs, & is essential unto Faith.* To limit faith to the Understanding, and to deny it any rooting in the Understanding, are both extremes

streams to be avoided. Truly we have but little acquaintance with our own Souls, and the faculties thereof; but this we know in general, that the Understanding and Will in us must concur in every act we perform, as Causes by Counsel, or that is properly humane. And hence, both these faculties must be sanctified for the producing of gracious actions. But more particularly observe,

(1.) *THAT* Christ is the Object on which the Soul terminates in Effectual Vocation. The effect wrought in Effectual Calling is, *We are made to believe in Christ; We come to him on his Call, follow him upon his Invitation, accept of him on his Offer.* He therefore is the Object proposed to us in the Gospel, unto whom we are to look that we may be saved. And this is the design of all the invitations given us to believe. The Preaching of the Gospel is therefore called the *Preaching of Christ*, Act. 8. 5. And Paul terminates his whole Preaching to the *Corinthians*, upon this Subject, *1 Cor. 2. 2.* When therefore we are truly brought home to Christ, then we are Called.

(2.) *THAT* the Soul is drawn to Christ, after the manner of a reasonable Creature. In the bringing the man actually to believe in Christ, which is the resistancy of this call, we are not carried by instinct, and a blind impulse, which many pretend unto. This would be to treat us, not as men, but as brutes; but it is by Counsel. And indeed, believing in Christ is a most deliberate act. The man considers and sees reason for what he doth. Paul could say, *2 Tim. 1. 12. For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.* For this reason it is that in the Gospel-Treaty, God not only bids men come to and believe in Christ, but reasons with them about it, and lays all convincing Arguments before them, to shew them the Necessity of it in order to Salvation.

(3.) *HENCE*, There must be the Assent of the Understanding in order to the consent of the Will. In Faith there is a trusting in Christ, which is properly a voluntary casting our selves on him for Life, but to a rational doing so, there must be an acknowledging of him to be an Object of Trust; One that is to be confided in, and that with safety, and this is properly an act of the Understanding. And this is, not only in order of Nature, but also of acting before the other, for though the Power of both, be at once infused in Regeneration, yet the order of exerting its Powers by a rational agent, is thus and no otherwise, viz. He sees that in Christ, which sets him forth to be an Object every way suitable to be trusted in, and he firmly believes him to be such as he is represented to him, and therefore he adventureth himself upon him, on his Invitation. It is therefore supposed, that every one that hath truly believed on Christ, is able to give a reason of his hope, *1 Pet. 3. 15.*

(4.) *THAT* in order to this Assent, the Mind

must be enlightened in the Knowledge of Christ. It must have the Light of it before it can improve it, and act by the direction and influence of it. There must be sight in the Eye, else it cannot see. If therefore the Man be blind, his Eye-sight be lost, it must be restored to him again, before he can see; for there must be a principle, before there can be an Operation. Such is the present case; for it is not a literal Knowledge, but a spiritual Discerning that is required to it. The Eye of Man's natural Understanding is not put out, he may therefore improve it to know Christ according to the flesh. But his spiritual Eye-sight is gone, and must be restored; this is properly the Image of God on the Understanding, which is to be renewed, *Col. 3. 10. The Assent of Faith, is a firm Belief and Acknowledgement, that Christ is an Object on whom the Soul may securely lean its whole repose for Eternity, and be happy in so doing.* Which that it may be gained, we must have such an effectual Discovery made of him in us, as fully convinceth us how and wherein he is so: And prevails over all doubts and jealousies in us, whether he be so or no. This is the Divine Illumination which we are considering of. Here then there are two things to be taken notice of with respect to it, viz. the Matter and the Manner of it.

1. *AS* to the Matter of it, it is the great Gospel Truths concerning Christ, as he is made to be an Object suitable for our Faith to build upon. I will not here dispute what Articles about Christ are necessary to be known, or what is the distinctness of the Knowledge of them, that must be in that Knowledge that accompanies Salvation. A difference of Times, and Means, and Opportunities must here be acknowledged; and the Sovereignty of free Grace in the Communications of it itself is to be adored. But I shall offer to touch on these heads, which do principally belong to this Knowledge of Christ, for which we are to wait upon God in the use of all the Means appointed. And they are,

1. *THE* Truths which concern the Person of Christ. In Effectual Calling we believe on Christ for Salvation. We must therefore believe that he is able to save to the uttermost, for which end, we must know how he came to be so; which we cannot know, without some acquaintance with his Person, viz. That he is the Eternal Son of God, according to his Divine Nature, and that he is the Son of Man according to his Humane Nature. Hence we must know and believe that the second Person in the blessed Trinity was Incarnate; that the Word was made flesh, that he took our very Nature upon him, without which he could never have wrought out that Salvation for us, which we stood in need of. For except he had been Man, he could not have answered the demands of the Law for us, and stood as our Surety; and unless he had been God, he could not have

completed that Suretyship, by paying the full price of our Redemption.

2. *THE Truths that discover the great Design of his being such a Person; or the Reason why the Son of God took our Nature upon him, and appeared clothed with our flesh.* All of which amount to that in fine, viz. That he might redeem and save us. Hence we must know that the Son of God, together with his being made a man, was also made under the Law, for the accomplishing of this affair, Gal. 4. 4, 5. *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* It was that he might answer the demands of Justice for us; and by doing and dying for us, might lay in a compleat Righteousness that might stand for our Justification, and make way for the manifestation of the free Grace of God in our Salvation. Hence that, 2 Cor. 5. 21. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* And that this design was contrived & fixed, in a firm agreement that past between his Father and him, on which the acceptance of him, in pursuit of it, doth depend. According to, Zech. 6. 12. *Even he shall build the Temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.*

3. *THE Truths that refer to the Offices he bore for the management of this design.* It was requisite that he should be invested with Authority sufficient for this affair. Hence his Inauguration. He therefore saith, Math. 28. 18. *And Jesus came, and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* Now for the completing of our Salvation, there must be satisfaction made to the Justice of God for us; whence is his Priesthood. And we must be guided into, and led in the way of Peace; to the former of which his Prophecal, and to the latter his Kingly Office refer. So that we must know him in these Offices, and therein, how suitable an one he is to engage in this great Work, as having to do by them both with God and man; and so being fit to be a Mediator between them: as he is for this reason called, 1 Tim. 2. 5. *For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

4. *THE Truths which discover his full Sufficiency to answer this design.* For it is not enough for us to lean our weight on one that hath undertaken, unless he be also able to go through with his undertaking. And here we must know what he hath already done for this end, or that Redemption which he hath gone through, in his Life & Death; and how therein he answered all the demands of the Law, and that both for the satisfaction of revenging Justice for our offences, and the purchasing of the Kingdom of Glory, and all

the blessings referring to it for us. Whereby he hath made that a Truth, Heb. 10. 14. *For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* As also, that whatsoever remains to be done in bringing us to the full possession of the purchased Inheritance, by making us meet for it, is secured in him. According to, Heb. 7. 25. And here we are to be acquainted with the Doctrine of his Humiliation and Exaltation.

5. *THE Truths wherein we are assured, that he is ready & willing to receive all Comers to him, and save them.* His Ability considered alone, is not sufficient to our satisfactory reliance on them, tho' it have encouragement in it to seek him for Salvation. Many therefore stick here. They are afraid whether he will accept of them, if they come, and are too apt to put themselves out of hope, by aggravating their misery to bring them to despair. This therefore must be believed, That Christ stands at the door, and knocks: That he will cast out none who are persuaded to come unto him: That he delighteth in shewing mercy. That if weary & heavy laden Sinners come to him, he will give them rest. That scarlet and crimson sins cannot prevent his shewing them mercy, if they confess and forsake them, and cast themselves upon him by Faith: That the glory of his Grace is hereby exalted, and the very end of his Redemption is obtained hereby.

2. *As for the manner of it; Or how he thus Illuminates them.* And here,

1. *HE lets in a divine light into the Understanding, by which it is renewed.* He doth not put a new faculty into the man, but he restores the Image of God to it. Hence it is compared to the causing of the light to shine out of darkness, in the first Creation, 2 Cor. 4. 6. This is called the giving us an Understanding, 1 Feb. 5. 20. It is called an opening of the eyes, &c. Act. 26. 18. Intimating that they were before shut, and under the power of darkness. We are therefore told how it is with the natural man in this regard, 1 Cor. 2. 14. *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Not only is there a revelation of these truths in the Word, (but for which Natures light could have never groped them out,) but there is a power put into the man to see spiritual things with a spiritual eye. Moses complains of them, Dent. 29. 4. *Yet the Lord hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.* And yet he tells them they had seen them, ver. 2. *And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land.* So that it is a new light that is given them, and properly belongs to the new Creature.

2. *HE brings this Object into the Understanding in its glorious lustre.* The man before

before had a notion of the Truths concerning Christ, and could talk of them, and argue about them; but he saw no beauty nor glory in them, nor in him whom they concerned. It might be said of it as, *Isai. 53. 2.* He is now made to see the King in his Glory. He acts the truths upon the Understanding, so as that Christ is made to appear the *Chief of ten thousands, and altogether lovely.* The most beautiful & amiable Object even to astonishment and admiration; which transports the Soul into an extasy. And all things else, which sometimes seemed to dazzle him, are made to appear vile compared with the excellency of Christ, *Phil. 2. 8.* He causeth Christ to possess the Understanding, as the adequate Object of it, *Col. 1. 17, 18, 19.*

3. *HE brings in this light with a convincing Evidence of the divine Testimony.* He beats these Truths upon the Understanding, with that efficacy that is irresistible; he writes the law of them on the mind, and stamps the witness of God himself upon it, with evidencing certainty; called a receiving of it, *Joh. 3. 33.* *He that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal, that God is true.* We are told that the *work of Faith is wrought with power, Eph. 1. 19. 1 Thes. 1. 11.* He can no longer withstand the efficacy of the Truth. He is now assured that Christ is such an Object, as he is represented to be, *Joh. 6. 69.* *And we believe, and are sure that thou art that Christ the Son of the living God.* And he now is thoroughly persuaded that Christ invites him to come to him, and adventure upon him. He is made to hear the voice of the Son of God, and feels in himself a strong call to arise and come away to Christ as the rock of his Salvation.

4. *HE puts a new Judgment into the Understanding.* Judgment belongs to the practical Understanding, by the exercise whereof it gives its determinate advice to the Will, and fully concludes what is to be chosen, what to be refused. In order to which determination, the judgment must be settled. Now in order to this Faith on Christ, there must be such a light let in, as may bring the judgment to a conclusion; for want whereof all the Knowledge that a natural man hath of divine Truths, never settles him upon it. And here are two things,

(1.) *HE makes him clearly to apprehend the incomparable Excellency there is in Christ.* That he is the most eligible; that there is none like him, none to be compared with him. That there is none in Heaven or Earth to be desired in comparison with him; that he is worthy for whom all things are to be forsaken, that we may enjoy him; that there is no dispute in the case, whether we should forsake father and mother &c. to enjoy him; that all those are happy that put their trust in him; that to lose all, and gain Christ, is a good exchange, and will never repent him that so doth; that to miss of him is to be hopelessly undone. This is the spiritual Discerning

or Apprehending of Christ, mentioned in the Gospel.

(2.) *HE hereby puts the Understanding in a readiness to give in its full verdict for him, as an Object to be trusted in for Life & Happiness.* And this is the natural result of the forecited apprehension: For when the Judgment is enlightened in the premises, it is so fixedly prepared for the conclusion. When the Spirit of God hath thus caused the Understanding to know Christ, it cannot but declare for him.

Use. *THIS consideration may help us in our Trial of our Title to Christ, and Life by him.* And it will afford no small relief to the Soul, that may possibly doubt about the truth of his closure with Christ by Faith. It is certain, that if Faith be in the Understanding, it is also in the Will: but we may have a more clear discerning of it in one faculty, than in the other. Now there is certainly a distinguishing light, let into the Soul in *Effectual Calling*, which is a vastly different thing from the clearest light that is in a natural man, which is the light of Faith; and it is of the same nature with, though of a far lower degree, than the light of Glory. It is a light which carries its own evidence with it; for light is of a manifesting or evidencing nature. Ask your own Hearts then, what discoveries of Christ have been made to & in you? Hath the Spirit of God come into your Understandings, and given them a renovation? Do you see Christ with other Eyes than sometimes you did? Hath the glorious Face of Christ been so represented to you, as to darken all the lustre in every thing else, and make you despise what sometimes you admired? Have you seen so much of Christ, as hath made him *precious to you, 1 Pet. 2. 7.* Hath it drawn off your Eyes from all other Objects, so as to make you say as, *Psal. 73. 25.* *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* And the more you gaze upon him, the more admiration you conceive of him? Be not discouraged, I may say to you, as Christ did once to his Disciples, *blest are your Eyes, for they see.*

[APRIL 12. 1698.]

SERMON CXX.